

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2001**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, January 17, 2001, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. William Ingersoll of the U.S. Navy. A list of action items resulting from the meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. The committee's recommended language changes to the NELAC Accrediting Authority Standard (Chapter 6) are given in Attachment C. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and finalize the committee's recommended language changes for consideration by the NELAC Accrediting Authority Committee and to address other items of importance as summarized in the previously distributed meeting agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

After a welcome of participants, Mr. Ingersoll confirmed that everyone had received the committee's draft recommended language for consideration by the NELAC Accrediting Authority (Chapter 6) Committee, which had been distributed electronically prior to the meeting. He also confirmed that the format in which the proposed language changes were prepared is appropriate for submission to the Accrediting Authority Committee.

REVIEW OF RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE FOR CHAPTER 6

Noting that the deadline for submitting proposed changes to other NELAC committees is January 19, Mr. Ingersoll began the discussion of Chapter 6. The committee reviewed their recommended language changes point-by-point. There was spirited discussion of whether the recommended language is too prescriptive. It was noted that, while qualifications for assessors are outlined in Chapter 3 (On-site Assessment), some of the suggested modifications to Chapter 6 are an attempt to ensure that documentation of assessor qualifications is available for review. It was also noted that Chapter 6 as written requires that the accrediting authority maintain certain records for its external assessment bodies but not for its internal assessors. It was noted that it is important to corroborate through document review and interview that the accrediting authority is complying with its internal procedure for training assessors. Many committee members indicated that they do not consider such requirements as outlined in the proposed language changes to be onerous. Other committee members indicated that while they have no objection to requiring accrediting authorities to demonstrate that they are using qualified assessors, they do object to enumerating specific lists that are to be maintained by each accrediting authority. It was suggested that the NELAC Standard should only require accrediting authorities to document that their assessors are qualified and leave each accrediting authority to decide how it will document that its assessors are day-to-day participants in a quality program.

There was also considerable discussion of the definition of qualified technical support personnel and of lead assessor designation. It was noted that the term "lead assessor" was removed from Chapter 6 because the Accrediting Authority Committee did not want to restrict composition of

the assessment team. Noting that the term may be associated with credentialing and pay scale issues, a committee member expressed satisfaction with the NELAC use of “lead assessor” as the designated point of contact and coordinator for the assessment team.

One participant suggested that the Chapter 6 comments have little impact on the quality of the assessment process.

Mr. Ingersoll recorded modifications to the draft document in response to committee discussion. In closing, he called for any additional comments on Chapter 6 or other chapters of the NELAC Standard. Although it was noted that committee members may have future comments when new Chapter 6 language about accrediting authorities that recognize but do not grant National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) accreditation is made public, no additional comments were offered at this time.

UPDATE ON APPENDIX A

Ms. Marlene Moore informed the committee that she has received and will incorporate comments from Dr. Margo Hunt. Ms. Moore noted that she and Dr. Hunt differ in their thinking about the inclusion of logistical information in Appendix A. Dr. Hunt has suggested that the course should be offered in a traditional classroom setting in order for assessors to benefit from interaction with each other. Ms. Moore pointed out alternatives such as interactive online training, which would also address the expense issue of a 5-day classroom course. It was also noted that an annual meeting would allow assessors to interact with and learn from each other. Ms. Moore urged committee members to comment on this issue of logistics.

UPDATE ON APPENDIX C

In response to a question from Mr. Ingersoll, Ms. Mimi Uhlfelder informed the committee that the Appendix C subcommittee has not yet met. She noted that she has been concentrating on assessment checklist issues with Mr. Charles Dyer.

CHECKLIST UPDATE

Mr. Dyer addressed problems in interpreting the NELAC Standard versus what is on the 1999 version of the checklist currently available on the NELAC Website. This issue was raised in the committee’s previous teleconference by Ms. Moore. He noted that, to the best of his knowledge, the problems have been corrected in the 2000 version. Although the 2000 version has not yet been posted on the NELAC Website, Mr. Dyer did distribute it an electronic version to the members of the committee. He noted that neither he nor Ms. Uhlfelder have received any comments on the checklist.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

In response to committee questions, Mr. Ingersoll noted that he has not yet received accrediting authority Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) from New York, Florida, or New Hampshire.

These states have committed to providing the On-site Assessment Committee with their SOPs when they complete their latest update. There was some discussion of whether additional states will come onboard as accrediting authorities in the near future and of likely candidates.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Ingersoll asked participants to submit all final edits to the recommended language changes to Chapter 6 to him by close of business. He adjourned the meeting as the allotted time for the teleconference expired at 2:30 p.m. EST. The committee's next meeting will be on Friday, February 2, 2001, via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2001**

Item No.	Action	Responsible Member	Date to be Completed
1.	Committee will e-mail comments on proposed Chapter 6 changes to Mr. Ingersoll.	All	01/17/01
2.	Committee will e-mail comments on Appendix A training course logistics to Ms. Moore.	All	01/17/01

**PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2001**

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PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE NELAC STANDARDS

Commenter's Name: Bill Ingersoll

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Comment #1: Standard Rev. # Section # 6.2.3

A: Current Standard Text

6.2.3 a) The accrediting authority shall provide through publication, electronic media or other means a document or documents describing its environmental laboratory accreditation program.

B: Comment with Rationale

Section 6.2.3 (a) "shall provide" sounds too ambiguous because it does not require the AAs to "maintain" these documents. Section 6.2.3 (a)(1) C) should require the same types of documents, information, and review as the other sections [Sections 6.2.3, 6.3.1, 6.3.3.1, 6.4.2 b).]

C: Proposed Wording Change

6.2.3 a) Modify:

The accrediting authority shall maintain in hard copy, electronic media, or other means a document or documents describing its environmental laboratory accreditation program.

6.2.3 a) 1) Insert:

C) information setting forth the accrediting authority's assessor training and ongoing assessment program.

D) a list of qualified assessors and technical support personnel.

Re-letter the subsequent parts in (a)(1) as (E) through (I).

Comment #2: Standard Rev. # Section # 6.3.1

A: Current Standard Text

6.3.1 b) 10) the names, areas of responsibility, education and experience levels of all technical and assessment employees of any external assessment bodies used by the accrediting authority as required in 6.3.3.1.2 and 6.3.3.1.3(b)(3);

B: Comment with Rationale

Records are already required for external assessment bodies therefore it seem appropriate that the same requirements should apply to internal AA assessors. Sections 6.2.3, 6.3.1, 6.3.3.1, 6.4.2 (b) should require the same types of documents, information, and review.

C: Proposed Wording Change

6.3.1 b) Modify:

10) the names, areas of responsibility, education, training, and experience levels of all technical employees and assessors used by the accrediting authority as required in 6.3.3.1.2 and 6.3.3.1.3(b)(3);

Comment #3: Standard Rev. # Section # 6.3.3.1.3

A: Current Standard Text

6.3.3.1.3 b) 3) the policies and procedures for acquiring, training, supervising and evaluating the performance of contractors carrying out any part of the accrediting authority's laboratory accreditation program;

B: Comment with Rationale

6.3.3.1.3 (b) requires that an AA's Quality System Manual specify policies and procedures for training (among other things) the performance of contractors, but not of direct AA employees.

C: Proposed Wording Change

6.3.3.1.3 b) Modify:

3) the policies and procedures for acquiring, training, supervising, and evaluating the performance of accrediting authority employees or contractors carrying out any part of the accrediting authority's laboratory accreditation program;

Comment #4: Standard Rev. # Section # 6.4.2

A: Current Standard Text

6.4.2 b) 3) review selected laboratory accreditation cases;

B: Comment with Rationale

It is important to corroborate through document review and interview of personnel that the AA is complying with their internal procedures for training assessors.

C: Proposed Wording Change

6.4.2 b) Insert:

3) review the training records and conduct interviews of staff designated as qualified assessors to evaluate their training, knowledge of assessment techniques and the NELAC standard;

Re-number the subsequent parts in (b) as (3) through (6).

Comment #5: Standard Rev. # Section # 6.4.2

A: Current Standard Text

6.4.2 e) 1) all management and technical staff of the accrediting authority's environmental laboratory accreditation program; and

B: Comment with Rationale

It is important to verify through document review and interview of personnel that the AA is complying with their internal procedures for training assessors.

C: Proposed Wording Change

6.4.2 e) Modify:

1) all management, technical, and assessment staff of the accrediting authority's environmental laboratory accreditation program; and